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# PARIS FROM EDC TO WEU\*

By NATHAN LEITES and CHRISTIAN DE LA MALÈNE

ON July 28, 1949, the French parliament ratified the North Atlantic Treaty Organization; a week before, it had given its assent to the treaty establishing the Council of Europe. On May 9, 1950, M. Robert Schuman proposed the creation of a European coal and steel community.

None of these arrangements for the defense of the free world and the unification of Europe altered France's status as one of the "big three" of the West: her sovereignty was not going to be substantially reduced by the institutions then created or planned. And West Germany, while participating in the European organizations, would remain outside the Atlantic alliance, and was, for the time being, neither sovereign nor armed.

On June 25, 1950, South Korea was invaded; the following September, all Atlantic powers, except France, accepted Germany's entrance into NATO. France did not veto, as such, the rearmament of Germany that was implied by her joining NATO, but the French government presented an international framework that would reduce the dangers of German rearmament. The first suggestion was that limited German contingents simply be added to the already existing armed forces of the West. Then Paris conceived the idea of linking the rearmament of Germany to the creation of an integrated Europe limited to six member states: Germany, Italy, France, and the Benelux nations; the political positions of Britain and the Scandinavian countries precluded their joining any such arrangement. To some French parliamentarians, this linking of German rearmament and European integration was important chiefly as a device for reducing the potential dangers of a rearmed Germany; to others, it was even more important as a means of achieving European unification. These French proposals set into motion the train of events that led to the signing of the treaty establishing the European Defense Community on May 27, 1952.

It took the French parliament more than two years to decide whether to ratify the treaty. During this period, problems of foreign policy in general and the question of EDC in particular played an important role, at least outwardly, in French political life; conflicts in the sphere

\* This article is drawn from a study prepared by the authors for The RAND Corporation as part of a larger on-going study of French politics sponsored by that organization.

of external affairs especially seemed to become peculiarly intense. It soon grew clear that the Assembly could come to no quick agreement on EDC. Whenever the question of a decision on EDC was raised in parliament, the date of the final act was either postponed (often on the ground that "supplementary protocols" had first to be created or that "preliminary conditions" had to be satisfied), or, if a vote was taken at all (for instance, after an interpellation debate, as in November 1953, or on the occasion of the investiture of a new government, as in January 1953), it was on a text sufficiently ambiguous as not to entail either major repercussions or irrevocable commitments.

However, in the summer of 1954, further delay became difficult both in view of France's international situation and because the new government of Mendès-France had resolved to settle some major pending problems of French foreign policy. Parliament was called upon, more insistently than before, to decide how the defense of the free world was to be organized on the Continent, and what kind of Europe was to be created. The time had passed when the National Assembly could content itself with issuing vague pronouncements, as it had done in October 1950, February 1952, and November 1953, and as the Council of the Republic had done in October 1953. In the summer of 1954, the French parliament entered the period of binding decisions that was to stretch from August 30, 1954, when EDC was rejected, to March 27, 1955, when the ratification of the Western European Union was completed.

It is with this period that the present article is concerned; the attempt is to contribute insight into some of the motivations of the non-Communist French parliamentarians. (None of what follows is intended to apply to the Communists; their attitudes were not investigated in this study.) The analysis does not pretend to be complete. Attention is given to feelings and calculations with respect to only two of the important foreign policy considerations manifest at the time—the integrity of France, and its position in the free world—and to the parliamentary mechanics involved in the voting on WEU. Reasons of space make it necessary to put aside other matters of foreign policy, and of economics and domestic politics, that were perhaps of no less importance. To a significant extent, no doubt, the ideas and sentiments that will be discussed played the role of means unconsciously chosen, or screens deliberately used, to conceal the factors that were really motivating French parliamentarians. But it would be incorrect either to minimize the significance of the ostensible motives, or to deny them a substantial force of their own.

In view of the relatively greater weight given to foreign as against domestic policy in this article, it may be useful to indicate briefly the interplay of the two factors in the minds of the members of the parliament. The formation of the Mendès-France government in June 1954 indicated a change of policy on Indochina. In European matters, however, the government was intended to include representatives of both the partisans and the enemies of EDC. Yet the MRP and the Moderates—the two bodies in the Assembly that included the most fervent *cédistes*—were, on the whole, hostile to the government.<sup>1</sup> The Socialists, who had changed from opposition to Laniel to support of Mendès-France, were evenly divided on the question of EDC, and the governmental representation of the *Républicains sociaux* (ex-RPF), who were hostile to EDC, was increased.

This fragile equilibrium was upset in August 1954 when the government's proposals at the Brussels Conference became known. And when EDC was rejected ten days later, many of the supporters of EDC held the government responsible for killing it. Hostility to Mendès-France's European policy then became a major attitude of all those who opposed the government, whatever may have been the factors on which the opposition was really based.

By October 1954, many former supporters of EDC had become reconciled to the London Agreements, which seemed to them to be the least of the possible evils under the circumstances. But not all of those who came to this view proceeded to support Mendès-France. Their hostility toward him, which had led them to oppose his assumption of power in June, made them persist in opposing his foreign policy. In addition, they wanted the responsibility for consenting to the rearmament of Germany to rest with Mendès-France, and they therefore took care to vote against WEU.

Thus, when the Paris Agreements on the makeup of WEU were voted on in December, the genuine opponents of the measure—i.e., those who were against *any* German rearmament—were joined by many *ex-cédistes*, who voted against WEU for the domestic political reasons suggested above. Conversely, many deputies who disapproved of the new institution voted for it because they wanted to ensure the survival of Mendès-France. After the fall of Mendès-France, on the other hand, the Paris Agreements were defended before the Council

<sup>1</sup> The term "Moderates" will be used throughout to designate the *Indépendants*, the *Indépendants Paysans*, the *Paysans*, and the *ARS*. For convenience, and in accordance with the political slang of the period, the term "*cédiste*" will be used to refer to an advocate of EDC, and "*anti-cédiste*" will refer to an opponent.

of the Republic by various leaders who had previously opposed them. The majority of the MRP and the Moderates now voted in favor of the agreements, while most of the *Républicains sociaux*, freed of their concern for the survival of Mendès-France, rejected them.

Two factors contributed to the increasing role of domestic concerns during the period when WEU was under consideration. First, in the transition from EDC to WEU, the question of German rearmament was divorced from the issue of an integrated Europe, thus tending to make a vote for WEU appear as support of German rearmament pure and simple, which no member of parliament could have viewed as politically advantageous to himself. Secondly, it was very widely taken for granted that the French parliament would not repeat its earlier refusal, that it would not reject WEU as it had rejected EDC in August 1954. Thus, since ratification of the Paris Agreements seemed to be a foregone conclusion, individual members of parliament could permit themselves to be guided more exclusively by what they conceived to be their personal or group interests.

Several of the interpretations advanced below are based not only on the facts adduced in their support but also on more general hypotheses about contemporary French politics whose nature will be indicated in the appropriate places.

It has not proved practicable to state with great specificity who, precisely, were the carriers of the broad trends of feeling and opinion that are analyzed here. Every parliamentary group was more or less divided on the issues; the precise distribution of positions on each matter within each group, apart from being insufficiently known, is hardly deserving of detailed exposition in an article such as the present one. Generally, when the "frequency" of pro-EDC sentiment is referred to, the statement, unless otherwise indicated, applies to incidence of such sentiment among all groups except the ex-Gaullists; frequency of anti-EDC sentiment refers to all groups with the exception of the MRP. (The Communists are always excepted.) Finally, unless stated otherwise, the attitudes discussed were publicly expressed in parliament.

### I. THE INTEGRITY OF FRANCE

Some of the hostility toward EDC manifested by French parliamentarians was related to the belief that, under it, France's armed forces would cease to be French. This concern was particularly serious, given existing apprehensions about the nation's capacity for survival and current suspicions about the presence in France of a powerful group

striving for a united Europe. Those who predicted that EDC would deprive France of an indispensable part of her substance, her army, usually also argued that this would work to Germany's advantage: the strongest member of the new community would dominate it, they feared; France would peacefully and smoothly fall under German control. In contrast, according to the dominant view, WEU would not really infringe upon France's sovereignty.

Similarly, it was widely felt that EDC would greatly reinforce the tendencies toward reduction or loss of France's control over her overseas domain (no such harmful prospect was ascribed to WEU). It was argued that France, in joining EDC, would appear much weakened, and would give the impression that she preferred her European to her world-wide alliances. For both these reasons she would be less able to continue her present role overseas.

Such prospects seemed all the more dangerous to the many parliamentarians of almost all shades of opinion who saw in "the French Union" the only hope of recovering France's past and progressively diminishing greatness. From this point of view at least, WEU appeared harmless by contrast.

#### "DENATIONAL" AND "TRANSNATIONAL" INSTITUTIONS

According to the general opinion in Paris, one of the important factors behind the rejection of EDC was the repugnance of many deputies toward what was felt to be the excessive importance of the "supranational" aspect of the treaty.<sup>2</sup>

WEU was not objected to on this score,<sup>3</sup> despite the fact that the WEU Council of Ministers had "powers of decision" in several major military matters over which France had no veto. One may well ask, then, how it was possible to affirm that French sovereignty would not be touched under WEU. The reason for the greater attractiveness of WEU was that, unlike EDC, it did not involve denationalization, particularly of the French army. Despite the fact that, under it, decisions binding on France could be taken against her will, the army nevertheless continued to exist as a national entity, and France's voice could be heard through its representative on the WEU Council of Ministers. WEU, then, could be called a "transnational" institution,

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Mendès-France, October 7, p. 4569. Page references are to the *Journal Officiel* of the National Assembly. Unless otherwise indicated, the debates referred to or quoted from took place in 1954.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. de Pierrebouurg, October 7, p. 4579; Vallon, October 12, p. 4671; Léon-Noël, December 21, p. 6705.

but it was not one that denationalized the military forces of its participants.

We can thus say that EDC was rejected largely because of the denationalization that it involved. WEU, involving only "transnational" arrangements, was more palatable to the French parliament.

The extent and political spread of opposition to any form of denationalization are clear from the similarity of reactions of men as different in age, intelligence, and political tradition as Herriot and Mendès-France.

This is how M. Herriot evaluated the provision of the EDC treaty (paragraph 2, Article 20) that required members of the Commissariat to submerge all national interest in favor of "the supranational character of their function": "This clause is both monstrous and ridiculous (Applause on the Extreme Right, numerous benches of the Left and some benches of the Right). What patriotic Frenchman would agree to represent his country in this fashion? (Applause on the same benches) . . . I wonder whether there is any chance of finding men willing to renounce their national origin. . . . This appears to me so monstrous that I cannot accept the idea. But what if one were not to find them? The commissioners would then have to be abstract beings, supermen or robots . . ." (p. 4465).<sup>4</sup>

The day before, on August 29, Mendès-France, too, had discussed Article 20 of the EDC treaty: "At least in the beginning every commissioner will think of his own country (Very good, very good! on numerous benches). He will not be able to do otherwise than to think of his own country. He will necessarily let himself be guided by pre-occupations arising out of the situation of his own country" (p. 4427). Denationalization, in other words, was above all unfeasible. It was also dangerous, although, he protested, morally defensible: "I happen to have participated in international institutions as a representative of my country . . . , in the International Monetary Fund and in the International Bank. . . . I should like to make a confession which is perhaps to the honor of Frenchmen. I have in fact seen Frenchmen who rose above the national interest to attach themselves to that of the community which they were directing. But I must say that I have rarely seen representatives of certain other countries act in the same fashion (Applause on the Left, on the Extreme Right and on certain benches of the Right)" (pp. 4427, 4428).

<sup>4</sup> The following are the meanings of the terms used in the *Journal Officiel*: Extreme Right—*Républicains sociaux*; Right—*Modérés*; Center—MRP and *Indépendants d'Outre-Mer*; Left—Radicals, UDSR, Socialists; Extreme Left—Communists.

There is nothing peculiarly French in this reaction to the suggestion of a supernational institution. There are, however, several reasons why the French are more intensely averse than other nations to any attempt at denationalization.

Paris is the only major Western capital in which some people actually believe in the possibility that their nation may cease to exist, and where locutions such as "the agony of France" and "the death of France" are neither simple hyperbolas nor attempts by intellectuals to stun their contemporaries, as has sometimes been suggested.

This sentiment was reflected in the words of M. Herriot, on August 30, in which he rejected one of the major pro-EDC arguments during the final phase of the battle over EDC, namely, the contention that the treaty was capable of improvement: "I am giving you my innermost thoughts on the threshold [*sic*] of my life. . . . I shall condense in this conviction all the efforts I have been able to make: for us the European Community is the end of France. . . . For us it is not a question of detail . . . of the change of commas . . . of added phrases. For us it is a question of the life and death of France" (p. 4467). And he quoted the statement of Clemenceau, made in a situation identical with his own ("shortly before his death"): "Don't forget, Frenchmen, that even a great nation may disappear" (p. 4468).

Clearly, in view of such sentiments, the reactions to a proposal involving denationalization, such as the EDC, were bound to be particularly unfavorable. It was not an atmosphere propitious to the statement by Mendès-France, on August 29, that he wished with all his heart that men might come to "shed their national personality" in order to let themselves be guided exclusively by "international preoccupations" (p. 4428)—a statement which he has never repeated.

But there were still other factors that militated against French readiness to accept denationalization. There seemed to be, in influential Paris circles, a certain apprehension of collective death (not necessarily or consciously related to the prospect of another war). In addition, there was also a belief that an occult and powerful group was *aiming* at the disappearance of France. Jean Monnet (whom General de Gaulle in his press conference of November 12, 1953, called "the inspirer" without identifying him) was believed to have placed members of that group in crucial positions, where they could work toward the disappearance of the Continental nations, in favor of a united Europe. "Technocrats," impatient with obsolete and inefficient national traditions and barriers, were thought to have combined their efforts with those of political leaders who wanted to recapture medieval unity.



True enough, the general belief in the central role of Jean Monnet in Paris politics seemed to decline as the treaty weakened. But the association between the provisions of EDC and the enormous objectives attributed to him had been established not only for the ex-Gaullists, but also in the eyes of numerous Moderates and Radicals, some influential Socialists, and even a few MRP. They suspected that, to the small group essentially responsible for EDC, denationalization was not a painful sacrifice serving such definite national goals as the control of Soviet expansionism or German militarism, but a clever utilization of these problems in order to involve France in a setup that would lead to its disappearance as a nation in favor of a larger community.

This belief caused a much stronger reaction against EDC than was warranted by the degree of denationalization actually involved in it. Many of its enemies saw in the treaty not a restriction of freedom for the entire body of France—which they might have been willing to accept—but, rather, the amputation of one of the body's precious organs, its ailing army. This feeling, though not often publicly expressed, was reflected by M. Lapie (Socialist) on August 29, when he spoke of "... the acute danger which touches the hearts of all of us, the danger that the French Army might disappear, the Army which, through all changes of regime, we know to be the permanent artery of the fatherland" (p. 4416). It was again voiced by M. Bardoux (*Modéré*), recalling on December 21 that an "integrated Europe" would have been "a Europe of castrated states" (p. 6695).<sup>5</sup>

A final factor in the opposition to the treaty was a widespread conviction that under EDC the armed forces would not retain their denationalized character for long, but would acquire the national coloration of their strongest national element, Germany. The lack of barriers within EDC would be to the advantage of the strongest; and France, being weak, therefore had to insist on the maintenance of certain barriers in order to avoid falling under German control. In discussions on the London Agreements, the *cédiste* Paul Reynaud remarked that under WEU the German "Great General Staff" would reappear and

<sup>5</sup> The treaty might have appeared less unacceptable to many if, without changing the true content of a single article, it had called for an "association of European armies," among them, the French army. On the other hand, the fact that such rephrasing would have meant the inclusion of the German army as well would have cost the treaty a number of votes (e.g., from the Socialists), which might have offset the gains on the "right" side of the Assembly. In this context it may be interesting to recall a statement by Mendès-France on December 23: "Between the EDC and the Paris Agreements . . . there are immense differences of a political, technical, psychological kind. . . . But on the strictly military plane the differences are . . . insignificant" (p. 6814).

"after a few years" would "establish control over the government of its country" (October 7, p. 4775). Similarly, many anti-*cédistes* thought it inevitable that, within a few years, the German components of EDC would quietly gain control over the entire EDC community and thus also over the former French army.

While the larger part of the French political class may have been little affected by the above-mentioned myth of the possible "death of France," its members were, of course, fully aware of the steady decline in the country's power, and rejected the thought of adding to earlier losses by an act of voluntary "abandonment"—a word that carries significant connotations for contemporary Frenchmen. In the words of M. Lacoste (Socialist): "We know perfectly well that the modest position of France in the world does not allow her to entertain vast ambitions. But all the more must she cling to the position she occupies. She must not descend further; she must maintain herself on her present level against all inimical factors" (quoted by *Le Monde*, September 29, 1954).

As we said before, one of the major objections to EDC was the degree of denationalization that it involved, while WEU was acceptable to the French parliament as involving only "transnational" arrangements. In October, Mendès-France's most solid and least conditional support for WEU came from the ex-Gaullists, who had formed the spearhead of the fight against denationalization by EDC. Without fear of shocking them, he could say about WEU that "It is not, as one might have *feared* . . . an association . . . without any element of supranationality" (October 7, p. 4570; italics added). For the "supranational" elements involved were merely transnational. The existence of the French army having been safeguarded, one could accept certain limitations on its freedom of movement as a painful but inevitable sacrifice for the sake of definite national goals. Even M. Soustelle, who was going to vote against the Paris Agreements, admitted that "The agreements . . . do not drown our army or our foreign policy in a kind of nation-less magma. They leave us the core of a national sovereignty, the use of which has already been so profoundly limited" (December 21, p. 6696).

We have tried to show that some of the aversion to EDC was connected with the belief that it would deprive France's armed forces of their French character—a fear that was intensified by misgivings about the nation's capacity for survival, and by suspicions that an influential political group was striving for a united Europe. Those who held this view were inclined to believe that EDC would work to the advantage

of its strongest member, and that France would rapidly fall under the control of Germany. By contrast, WEU appeared to have a much more limited impact on the nation's future and to present no serious threat to France's sovereignty.

#### THE AREA OF THE "SUPERNATIONAL"

Under WEU France was required not only to assign a smaller part of her armed forces to supernational control; she was also called upon to relinquish less of her control over her entire military establishment than would have been the case under EDC. Under the latter, the French army would have continued to exist only outside European France. At Brussels, Mendès-France tried to render possible a French army on the French mainland by "the limitation of the principle of integration to the covering forces." The London Agreements permitted the presence in European France of units of the French army outside WEU, under the article which allows a member state to "... dispose, apart from forces put under NATO (via WEU), of so-called national forces. These would be composed, on the one hand, of forces stationed overseas, and, on the other hand, of reserve divisions stationed on the Continent, but ultimately destined for overseas needs" (Mendès-France, October 7, p. 4570). And nothing in the Paris Agreements seemed to limit French sovereignty as to the strength or numbers of such "so-called national forces."

The reduction in the area of the supernational in WEU, as compared with EDC, no doubt played a major role in making enemies of EDC assent to the new arrangement. On the other hand, this very reduction also contributed to the anti-WEU feeling of those who had looked to EDC as a means of "building Europe."

#### THE DOMAIN OF FRANCE: BREAKUP VERSUS INDIVISIBILITY

According to the belief of its enemies, and to the mild distress of many of its proponents, EDC would have endangered what is usually (and not quite correctly) called *l'Union Française*, i.e., the cohesion between metropolitan France and her overseas connections. If the overseas bonds of Great Britain did not permit London even to consider the possibility of entering EDC, how could Paris act otherwise without risking a reduction of its domain to a Continental "hexagon" of insignificant size?

WEU, on the other hand, was acceptable to enemies of EDC because, in the words of M. Vallon, "... the London Agreements ... do not threaten ... the cohesion of the French Union" (October 12, p. 4671).

And, according to M. de Pierrebouurg, ". . . the unity of our French Republic which stretches from Lille to Brazzaville has not been broken" (October 7, p. 4579). Thus the earlier concern for the preservation of what had been the French Empire was virtually absent from the debates of December and March.

The argument of the anti-EDC faction was that the curtailment of her sovereignty would fatally weaken the already gravely threatened position of European France in her overseas domain. With the sovereignty of metropolitan France thus reduced and that of overseas France remaining unaffected, the predominance of the former over the latter could hardly have been maintained. In the words of the *rapporteur* of the EDC treaty for the Overseas Territories Commission of the Assembly, M. Apithy (*Indépendant d'Ostre-Mer*): "We are led to ask ourselves how large an abandonment of sovereignty can be tolerated by a state which pretends to govern a large number of diverse people dispersed in extra-European areas. . . . How could an undeveloped but sovereign domain remain in the dependence of another area which is highly developed but which would have lost its sovereignty?" (August 29, pp. 4420f.).

More particularly, such a large-scale abandonment of sovereignty by metropolitan France would, it was believed, be regarded outside France as an abandonment also of France's overseas domain in favor of European "integration." In the words of Jean-Paul Palewski (*Républicain social*): "The ratification of EDC would, to an incredible degree, weaken the bonds which unite the citizens of the French Union with the motherland, by which they would feel in some fashion abandoned" (August 28, p. 4404). And here one must again remember the sinister connotations that the word "abandon" has for most contemporary Frenchmen.

The law of retaliation would then operate against France: having abandoned, she would, in turn, be abandoned. On August 29, M. Apithy quoted an MRP Counsel of the French Union, M. Vignes, as predicting that ". . . the integration of metropolitan France alone into a European community would lead to separatism in the overseas territories, a separatism encouraged by the secession of the metropolis."

Clearly, the strong, traditional French tendency toward centralization, toward a state "one and indivisible," would make for very unfavorable reactions to any single act that might destroy unity and start such a fatal chain of "abandonments." If dismemberment is regarded as a useful means of rendering a dangerous neighbor less powerful, one must, for that very reason, avoid it for oneself.

The ideas which we have just sketched were direct expressions of strong feelings, unlikely to be affected by subtle revisions of treaty texts. This in part explains the limited role in the conflict over EDC that was played by various articles of the Additional Protocols to the EDC treaty, signed on March 24, 1953, and designed to reduce the separation which, it was feared, the treaty might create between the French contingents in EDC and those outside metropolitan France. What is more, the complexity of these dispositions discouraged parliamentarians at large and even disoriented the small circle of initiates; one anti-EDC deputy exclaimed in desperation: "What a treaty! Nobody is able to understand it! (Laughter and applause on the Extreme Right and on the Left, *mouvements divers*)" (August 29, p. 4446).

The damage that EDC might inflict on France's extra-European positions appeared all the more catastrophic because the French Union was regarded in many parliamentary circles as the only basis for a possible reconquest of France's greatness. It had become almost a cliché that France herself, without her "extensions," was "nothing," but that French Eurafrica could be much. Overseas France had been able to some extent to right the situation compromised by the metropolitan collapse in the spring of 1940. Now again, the only possibility for remedying the consequences of France's decline over the previous ten years seemed to lie in a transfer of French energy toward the "extensions" of France's body. And EDC threatened to cut these potential power centers off from metropolitan France.

To be sure, when Mendès-France affirmed on August 29 that "the French Union . . . remains our principal force and our principal hope" (p. 4432), he was merely expressing a hope, not speaking of results already obtained or of precise plans for a near future. And if, on the one hand, possibilities of future developments overseas often seemed grandiose, they were, on the other hand, frequently regarded as illusory in view of metropolitan France's lack of resources and energy, and because of native resistance and foreign interference. This pessimistic feeling has, of course, grown stronger since the fall of 1954. Moreover, a hope such as that expressed by Mendès-France tended to be forgotten by parliament when it was absorbed, as it generally was, in domestic affairs. Although a remote territory like Haute-Volta may, legally, be just as much part of the French Republic as any metropolitan *département*, it is nevertheless difficult for metropolitan Frenchmen to feel about possible achievements down there in the way in which they would react, for instance, to economic dynamism within the country itself.

But whenever the possibility of using the French Union as a last recourse against the unfavorable tendencies of the century has been threatened, Frenchmen have rallied to defend what they regard as a last chance to recover greatness. This was revealed by an incident which occurred in the debate on the London Agreements. Criticizing these agreements, M. Simonnet (MRP) stressed the new treaty's "discriminations" against France in favor of Great Britain. And he concluded on a note of resignation: compared with that of England, the situation of European France was, he implied, so unfavorable—exposed as she was to the divergent threats and demands of Moscow, Bonn, London, and Washington—that there was no choice: "We can accept or refuse this situation. I should like to say right away that I am at the moment in favor of acceptance" (October 8, p. 4639). His purely European perspective had led him to be discouraged. At that moment, Mendès-France, by widening the horizon and reminding the deputies of the existence of overseas France, produced the most favorable reaction of the day. M. Simonnet had recalled that Great Britain would be a full member of the Council of Ministers of WEU, but that the jurisdiction of that body was purely Continental and did not extend to the British Isles. This Mendès-France admitted, but he added: "I am asking you, my dear colleagues, not to forget that . . . the French overseas territories are equally excluded from that authority" (p. 4647).

By recalling overseas France to parliamentary consciousness, in the context of a problem which seemed insoluble on a purely European basis, Mendès-France restored the belief in Franco-British equality which is so important to the French political class. To the delight of the Assembly, he continued with an allusion to an overseas France as the rich and safe center of French power in the second half of the century: "We shall be just as free as is Britain in her insular territory to proceed with the production of arms of all kinds, for example, in North Africa. Let me say on this occasion that I believe we should locate in North Africa certain installations which we have probably been wrong in concentrating in the metropolis" (*ibid.*).

But side by side with this vision of French Africa as a powerful extension of France, there existed in the minds of parliamentarians another view of overseas France, that of a burdensome ward which, like Indochina, might reduce, and perhaps exhaust, the strength of the metropolis. M. Soustelle, employing the same argument that the ex-Gaullists had used against EDC, predicted that, in WEU, Germany "has every chance of becoming predominant," and reasoned as follows: "As Germany does not possess overseas territories, and consequently

is not beset by problems similar to those with which we will have to contend . . . for years in Africa, she will be free to concentrate all her forces on Europe" (December 23, p. 6819).

One or the other of these contradictory beliefs came to the fore according to shifts in events or arguments; but they were rarely fitted into a coherent whole.

In summary, we may say that its opponents saw in EDC an institution that would deprive France of her army and merge her into a Continental organism, thus endangering her chances of retaining any degree of control over her former empire. The more limited arrangements of WEU, on the other hand, appeared as a far lesser threat to France's hold on her overseas territories and thus to her chances of recovering through them her past greatness.

## II. THE POSITION OF FRANCE IN THE FREE WORLD

In the eyes of its enemies, EDC threatened not only to impair France's integrity, but also to reduce her status within the concert of the free world's powers. Many believed that to accept the loss of national integrity was to place France in a position of inferiority with regard to the other "big" powers of the West, Britain and America. Specifically, EDC would constitute a glaring denial of Franco-British equality; and Paris feels strongly about maintaining at least the appearance of that equality. It was widely felt, on the other hand, that British membership in WEU safeguarded this essential aspiration; that it prevented Germany's rearmament from becoming the occasion for France to "reverse" her alliance with America and England in favor of a Continental one; and that it reduced the chances of German hegemony in the new institution.

This feeling was strong so long as the British "concession" in entering WEU was news. But, after a short time, many of those who had at first been greatly reassured by it became once more apprehensive that France might fall under the domination of her stronger allies (Germany, Britain, America), and this fear contributed to the strong tendency to reject WEU as EDC had been rejected.

### FRANCE: ONE OF THE "GRANDS"

It was widely believed that under EDC France would lose her position as one of the Big Three by renouncing her sovereignty, while Britain and America were determined to keep theirs intact. Numerous Moderates and Radicals, and some Socialists, felt that those two powers

did not even consider making the kind of sacrifices that they expected of France. In the words of General Aumeran (*Modéré*): "We are still a nation . . . with rights equal to those of America and Great Britain. . . . The ratification of EDC would put us on the level of two defeated and three tiny countries" (August 29, p. 4437). As M. Marcellin (*Modéré*) put it: "Why is it so necessary today for France to preserve her sovereignty? . . . First of all, because the United States and Great Britain intend to preserve their full autonomy. . . . Our position would be quite different if our British and American friends would agree to abandonments of sovereignty. . . . The day they do that, we could accept similar sacrifices for France" (October 12, p. 4672).

Indicative, to many Frenchmen, of the state of inferiority in relation to London and Washington into which France would put herself by entering EDC was the manner in which the Anglo-Americans were pressing France to accept EDC, without being embarrassed by their own refusal to do likewise. Men as different as the Socialist M. Moch and the ex-Gaullist M. Triboulet expressed similar feelings on this subject. The former spoke of "friends eager to remain outside of EDC but pressing us to enter into it" (August 28, p. 4380), while the latter commented: "That the five nations which together with us have signed the EDC treaty invite us, even with much bitterness, as in Brussels, to adopt their attitude . . . is perfectly admissible. But it is very unseemly for the United States and Great Britain to call upon us to fuse with five nations on the European Continent and thus to lose our equality with the other two great powers" (August 28, p. 4397).

But behind the impropriety of the moment, M. Triboulet discerned a desire on the part of America and England to see France's international position reduced, "an impatience, as it were, to deal from now on with world strategy in an Anglo-Saxon *tête-à-tête*" (*ibid.*).

Another fear that was frequently voiced was that the creation of EDC would be followed by the replacement of the French representative in the NATO Standing Group by one of EDC. And membership in the Standing Group is cherished by French politicians as an institutional safeguard of France's eminence, against the time when, as many of them hope, her real strength will once more equal her official rank.<sup>6</sup>

If entering EDC meant a reduction in France's status vis-à-vis the

<sup>6</sup> From this position it is not far to the idea of using changes in institutions as a means for offsetting unfavorable developments in the relationship of real forces. Thus, at one point, M. Palewski accepted the entrance of Germany into NATO only on condition of a reform of that organization ". . . which would in particular tend to give the Standing Group—and we must remain one of its three members—a function of real strategic and political leadership" (October 12, p. 4670).



great powers, there were some who felt that it would render her inferior even to the many small powers that were absolutely unwilling to abandon any portion of their sovereignty. On August 30, the day that EDC was rejected, M. Herriot said: "There is no doubt that a large number of sovereign states remain in Europe . . . Britain . . . the United States . . . the Soviet Union, China, Switzerland, Norway, Spain, Turkey, Greece, and others yet" (p. 4464).

#### FRANCO-BRITISH EQUALITY

Even stronger than the desire to remain one of the "great" powers was the French demand for equality between Paris and London. In order to understand the exact nature of this demand, it may be useful to examine the French attitude toward equality with the other powers.

In the relationship with Moscow, the word "equality" is not really applicable. For not only does the power of the Soviet Union dwarf that of France, but Moscow, in recent years, has not been France's partner in international arrangements.

With regard to Bonn, the demand for "non-discrimination" has emanated from the German side. To heed it might be for the French a matter of necessity, but hardly one of positive national interest.

In the case of Washington, the demand for equality within the Atlantic alliance has often been tempered by French awareness of the great discrepancy between American and French power, and by the feeling that America may not need the French alliance quite so much as the French need the American connection, despite frequent affirmations to the contrary. Pro-Atlantic parliamentarians, for example, tended to accept without discussion the American nationality of SACEUR. And even though General de Gaulle in his press conference of February 25, 1953, had rejected EDC above all as reinforcing France's submission to SACEUR and its American chief, this was but a minor theme in the Gaullist deputies' campaign against EDC. Certain *ex-cédistes* criticized the London Agreements for increasing the powers of SACEUR. In the words of M. Teitgen: "General Gruenther . . . would receive full powers to settle all problems of integration [of WEU forces]. . . . Do you really believe that France, Germany . . . Benelux, and Britain could really abandon to General Gruenther . . . a problem of that importance?" (October 8, p. 4636). But M. Teitgen was primarily expressing the apprehension of *ex-cédistes* that General Gruenther might not share their own desire for a maximum national "integration" in WEU.

Another matter, which aroused still greater opposition, was the stipulation in the Paris Agreements by which American military aid to member states of WEU would be given directly to each beneficiary. Under EDC, Washington's contribution would have gone to the organization as a whole. French parliamentarians were practically unanimous in demanding the application of the EDC formula to WEU. And one of the factors behind this demand was the belief that, if the practice favored by Washington were to be adopted, each member state of WEU would continue to occupy an inferior status in its isolated and competitive dealings with America. In the words of the *enfant terrible*, M. Vallon: "By preserving her full freedom to bestow military aid on one nation or another, according to her whim, America will be able to exercise an untrammelled tyranny over Europe. That is too much!" (October 12, p. 4671). M. Vallon was working himself up to abstain from voting (out of good feelings for Mendès-France, he explained), and he was therefore making a rather feeble attempt to dramatize the inequality involved in the proposal. Actually, the considerable parliamentary displeasure which the arrangement provoked was directed at others of its aspects.

In the first place, it seemed to obstruct the creation of "Europe." Above all, however, many parliamentarians feared that, if America were free to distribute her aid among the members of WEU, she would favor Germany as promising the greatest military effort.<sup>7</sup> This fear of a possible Washington-Bonn axis weighed more heavily in the minds of deputies than the concern about French inequality in relation to America, an inequality which, to a certain extent, appeared inevitable and could be tolerated if Washington followed an acceptable policy.<sup>8</sup>

But if the French felt that they could never compete with America's vastly superior power, her genius for "productivity," and her enormous human and material resources, their feelings about Britain were quite different. Her resources were considered comparable to those of France, and yet they had permitted Great Britain to attain qualitative superiority. She was consolidating her position as a semi-giant, at the very moment that Paris was asking itself at what level of mediocrity the decline of French power would be arrested. French politicians thus regarded London with a mixture of guilt, admiration, envy, and uncertainty about their own ability to emulate the British achievement.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Paul Reynaud, October 7, p. 4576.

<sup>8</sup> When the London Agreements were debated, M. Palewski was alone in asking that Washington make an approach to equality with London and Paris by assuming military obligations similar to those offered by Sir Anthony Eden at the London Conference.

They were reluctant to agree to any arrangement that implied an official admission of French inferiority, and this reluctance was shared by a great many parliamentarians: from those who simply denied French deficiencies to those who recognized them and sought solutions in major reforms.<sup>9</sup>

This was a major reason for the great significance that Paris attached to British entrance into WEU. With Britain willing to submit to some of the same discipline and constraints, it was now possible for France to abandon her own sovereignty and yet to maintain the feeling of essential equality between Paris and London. It is in this sense that one should interpret Mendès-France's comments on the British offer: "It is not too much to say that the British government . . . has agreed to a real renunciation of sovereignty. This is a manifestation of discipline . . . which gladdens all Frenchmen" (October 7, p. 4571).

Another important reason why Paris welcomed British membership in WEU was that it reduced, or even removed, the aura of a "reversal of alliances" that had attached to EDC. For EDC had threatened to separate France from Britain and the United States by the very fact that it would have tightened France's bonds with Germany while leaving her relations with the Western powers essentially unchanged.

But the argument most often adduced in favor of British participation in any arrangement involving German rearmament was that Britain's presence alone could prevent a German hegemony in such a framework. Only with Great Britain would it be possible to establish an "equilibrium" that would protect France against being chronically overruled in the new institution.<sup>10</sup>

Those were the various aspects of Britain's inclusion in a European defense organization which, combined, led many parliamentarians to the conviction expressed by M. Loustaunau-Lacau (*Modéré*): "Rather no Europe at all than a Europe without Britain! But if Britain is politically and militarily present in Europe, who would not be a European?" (October 8, p. 4633).

<sup>9</sup> The desire to avoid a position of manifest inferiority to Britain was evident also in the October debates on the London Agreements, which were criticized by the *ex-cédistes* for "discriminating in favor of Britain."

<sup>10</sup> Practically no mention was made in parliamentary discussions of the clause by which Britain could withdraw her forces from the Continent (a) if, for instance, she obtained the agreement of Benelux, or (b) if the British government were to declare that "an acute overseas emergency" existed. (The latter provision recalls Agreement No. 6 of the Additional Protocols to the EDC treaty of March 24, 1953, which gave France similar freedom "in case of a grave crisis in a non-European territory in regard to which a member state of EDC assumes defense responsibilities.")

## IS FRANCE CONDEMNED TO SUBJECTION?

And yet, less than three months later, Mendès-France noted the disappearance of these agreeable feelings: "In October the British decision [to adhere to WEU] . . . was viewed by everybody as an immense success, as an unprecedented event giving us valid grounds for rejoicing. . . . The organic presence of Great Britain on the Continent appeared to all of us as a new fact of colossal importance. When I heard the Paris Agreements being disparaged these last days . . . I regretted that no attention was being paid anymore to this essential achievement [of the British presence] for which French governments had fought for so many years without being able to obtain it" (December 27, p. 6885).

Behind this development, which was decisive for the difficulties that WEU encountered in December, one perceives a human tendency that has been particularly evident in French politics and has contributed to the uniquely high mortality of French governments. It is the rapid decline in satisfaction once an advantage has been definitely established—the instability of desire after consummation.

As the pleasure in a given situation wanes, misgivings about its unfavorable aspects tend to rise. In the October debates on the London Agreements, the fear of German domination, which had contributed so powerfully to the rejection of EDC, had been sharply reduced by Britain's great "concession" in entering WEU. But by December, the saving event of October not only had lost much of its reassurance value, but even appeared in an unfavorable light. *Ex-cédistes* maintained that WEU would put Paris under the political domination of London as well as in military subjection to Bonn; in other words, they were applying to the new agreements a stigma similar to that which the enemies of EDC had attached to the treaty of 1952.<sup>11</sup>

The forecast of German military preponderance was not always coupled with that of British political control. At times, the specter was one of a Washington-Bonn axis strengthened by increased powers for SACEUR, on the one hand, and by the direct distribution of American military aid, on the other.<sup>12</sup> Another prediction was that France would fall under tripartite control: "In WEU the army will be German, the arms-controller British, and the general charged with the integration of the military establishments American" (Teitgen, December 22, p.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Paul Reynaud, December 22, p. 6760; Alfred Coste-Floret, December 22, p. 6770; Felix Gaillard, December 29, p. 6935.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Soustelle, December 21, p. 6697.

6752). (M. Teitgen, a fervent *ex-cédiste*, was to be a member of the government which, in March of 1955, insisted on the final ratification of WEU.)

But the predominant fear associated with EDC—the one that the transition to WEU had been designed to alleviate—returned in its pristine form once the October euphoria had passed. It was the suspicion that, whatever the institution, it would lead to German hegemony. Thus M. Palewski (who also was to support WEU the following March) spoke about it in December in much the way he had talked about EDC earlier: “From the first day of WEU there will be a German general staff, and a German representation in NATO, SHAPE and SACEUR. . . . These will exercise a very important influence. The role of the Germans in the interim EDC committee shows the extent to which they know how to impose their point of view on all our allies” (December 22, p. 6758). On December 29, he maintained that in WEU “. . . we must resign ourselves to seeing Germany occupy the first place on the Continent in the near future. . . . She will impose on us her own solutions in the Saar and as to the development of Africa” (p. 6937).

In this view—which was shared well beyond the limited circle of those who expressed it clearly—France would lose not only her military independence, but also the capacity for preserving her political independence in time of peace.<sup>13</sup> Whatever the particular policy under discussion, the prospect of French servitude always appeared plausible.

The preceding review of Paris opinion on the probable consequences of EDC and WEU for France’s position in the free world leads us to the following conclusions: EDC, so its enemies feared, would destroy France’s status as one of the “Big Three” of the West, and would consign France to a position of definite inferiority with regard to Britain in particular. When Britain agreed to enter WEU, her offer was at first regarded as removing this danger, assuring the continuity of France’s Anglo-American connection, and reducing the likelihood that a re-armed Germany would dominate the Continent. But, after a short while, this sense of relief was at least in part superseded by renewed apprehensions that WEU, too, might cause France to become subject to her stronger allies.

<sup>13</sup> This seems implied when M. Delbos foresaw (or pretended to foresee) as the immediate consequence of the rejection of the Paris treaty—apparently without any Soviet ultimatum or aggression—the reduction of France to satellite status (cf. December 27, p. 6876).

### III. SOME ASPECTS OF PARLIAMENTARY MECHANICS IN THE PASSAGE OF WEU

Attitudes focusing around the integrity of France, and the place of France among the powers, were by no means the only ones that bore on the defeat of EDC and the eventual passage of WEU. Other relevant foreign policy attitudes, too involved and, indeed, significant to be fairly dealt with in a summary fashion, concerned the German military danger, the defense of the free world against the Soviet Union, the possibility of negotiation with the East, and the international consequences of twice refusing a European solution. But even these foreign policy considerations do not fully explain the Assembly's behavior toward the successor to EDC; we must also look, albeit briefly, at the parliamentary mechanics involved in the passage of WEU.

#### CONCEPTIONS OF PARLIAMENTARY FREEDOM

On October 12, the Assembly passed a resolution approving the London Agreements without qualifications. On December 24, the Assembly rejected the Paris Agreements which gave legal form to the principles indicated at London. By this reversal, 113 deputies—21 Socialists, 26 Radicals and UDSR, four MRP, two *Indépendants d'Outre-Mer*, 26 *Modérés*, 32 *Républicains sociaux*, and two members not belonging to any group—in effect refused to honor what, outside of France, had generally been viewed as an obligation assumed by the vote of October.

This reversal occurred without explicit consideration—during the debates of December 21-23—of the inconsistency of behavior characterized by the two votes. Nor did this question play more than a quite secondary role in the debates of December 27-29 which preceded the final acceptance of WEU on December 30. In fact, the widespread approval of the London Agreements indicated in the vote of October 12 had been largely forgotten by December. When M. Bourguès-Maunoury brought the matter up, he pointed out a rather shocking situation: "Mesdames, Messieurs . . . I should like to examine two groups of dates with you. On the one hand there was February 19, 1952, and October 12, 1954. On these days the National Assembly approved a well-defined foreign policy. . . . On the earlier date M. Edgar Faure obtained 328 votes . . . in favor of a detailed project of a European defense community. On the later date M. Mendès-France obtained 350 votes in favor of the contours of WEU. . . . But we must also envisage two other dates, those of rejections. On August 30, 1954, EDC got only 264 votes, and on December 24, WEU but 259. . . . Thus

the Assembly approved the sketches of two projects conceived by France, and then changed its mind on the final results" (December 27, p. 6878).

How easy it is to forget one's recent parliamentary past may be seen from an instance in which an influential deputy seems to have lost sight in December of the actions in which he himself had engaged in October. When the London Agreements were being discussed, Gaston Palewski had proposed a resolution indicating a set of conditions which the future treaty should satisfy. But he had also at the end of the debate voted in favor of the resolution of M. Aubry according to which "... the National Assembly, informed ... of the result of the London Conference, extends its confidence to the government. ..." (October 8, p. 4644).

That this resolution implied an unconditional approval of the London Agreements had been underlined by Mendès-France: "If you vote this resolution, you will be approving what the government has done during the last weeks, and you will be expressing your confidence in the government, which you will be asking to continue the same policy and to carry it to its conclusion, that is, up to the point of submitting to you for ratification the treaties which will have been worked out with our allies and partners" (October 8, p. 4654). Mendès-France rejected Palewski's resolution, declaring that "... while it contains a number of indications which are not far from the thoughts of the government, it also includes several points with which the government does not agree" (*ibid.*). Yet Palewski voted for the resolution that was acceptable to the government.

But when he recalled the October debate on December 27, it was only his own personal resolution of October which Palewski remembered. Seeking to justify the rejection of WEU by himself and numerous *Républicains sociaux*, whose change of mind had contributed to the surprise of December 24 and was still endangering the Paris Agreements when he spoke, Palewski declared: "M. le Président du Conseil: In October it fell to me to announce the near-unanimous vote of my group in your favor. But I could repeat today my entire speech of that date, for with one exception you have failed to satisfy any of the conditions which I then posed" (p. 6888). In this fashion, the primacy of his personal position in the mind of a deputy may mask the incoherence of his votes; the persistence of unsatisfied desires may obscure the compromises concluded.

The deputies who rejected the Paris Agreements after accepting those of London, and did not attempt to justify the change, expressed by

their silence not only embarrassment or failure of memory, but also a basic refusal to be bound by their own past actions. This is a point that calls for some elaboration.

In October, those who were about to approve the London Agreements would, on the whole, have refused to grant that such approval involved a moral obligation or a political necessity to ratify the treaty that was later expected to emerge from the London Conference. They would have argued that it was impossible to approve in advance a treaty that had not yet been drawn up.

In October, many parliamentarians believed that the general principles embodied in the London Agreements were no more important for their final decision than the as yet unformulated details of the WEU treaty. M. Soustelle put it this way: "It is not a ratification debate which opens today in our Assembly. We have before us today not the text of a treaty to be approved or modified [*sic*] . . . but rather certain extremely important general orientations. To these, however, the future may add not less important modifications" (October 8, p. 4623).

This view—and this is the significant point—stood in clear contrast to the prevailing interpretation of the situation in the other Western capitals, where it was believed that the London Agreements were sufficiently rich in content to enable the French parliament to express a binding yes or no that would hold for a later treaty embodying the same principles.

In fact, there were those even in Paris who felt that the final decision of parliament at a later vote of ratification would be determined by the principles agreed upon in London. General Aumeran, for example, recalled the approval of the principles of EDC in 1952 and added: "When the full text of the Paris Treaty had become known, opposition steadily mounted until EDC was rejected on August 30. Would it not have been better to reject the very principle at the outset? For it was, finally, this principle which was refused" (October 7, p. 4581).

It would be an exaggeration to say that the October insistence on the difference between approval of principle and treaty expressed only a desire to preserve the precious freedom of changing direction. A certain number of deputies believed—partly, of course, because they were not yet up against the question of ratification—that the advantages and the disadvantages of WEU were about equally balanced, and that they therefore needed to know all the details of the forthcoming treaty before they could arrive at a decision.

But, when the Paris Agreements were concluded, it was difficult not to see that they added very little to those of London. In fact, in the



words of Mendès-France on December 23, they were fashioned "in strict application of the conclusions of the London Conference." Appealing to the 350 deputies who had voted in favor of these conclusions, Mendès-France went on: "I am still waiting for even a single one of these deputies to say at the rostrum: Since October 8 the government has not fulfilled the mandate with which it had been entrusted. I shall enumerate the concessions which it has, wrongly, made. I shall indicate the points on which it has not honored the obligations into which it entered" (p. 6811).

Mendès-France was left waiting. The virtual silence of the 113 deputies who changed their minds in December about the reasons for this change not only implied that they saw no essential difference between the London and Paris Agreements, but also showed that they were not prepared to justify their new stand by citing a change in the world situation. It was only M. Soustelle (December 21, p. 6696) who alluded to changes in international politics as rendering WEU less desirable than it would have been in October.

Of course, the silence of the deputies who changed their minds also enabled them to avoid a flat denial of the binding character of the October vote. Such a denial was in fact made explicitly only by two somewhat eccentric deputies. The old Radical, M. de Moro-Giafferri, said: "When we approved your policy after your journey to London, M. le Président du Conseil, . . . we wanted to encourage you with all our heart, but we did not want to bind ourselves" (December 27, p. 6874). And the rank-and-file MRP, Auguste Billiémas, after having confessed that ". . . this is one of the first occasions on which I dare to speak. . . . I am in all respects an average deputy. . . . When I speak, for once, I do think that I merit a little bit of attention on the part of my colleagues . . .," declared on December 29: "I have up to now voted against the Paris Agreements, and I shall continue doing so, though I did vote in favor of the London Agreements. But the vote in favor of the London Agreements is out of date. It was, at least as far as I am concerned, more about the Président du Conseil than about the substance of the problem" (p. 6924). This statement illustrates the crucial role played by feelings and calculations concerning the survival of a government even in votes dealing with highly important questions, and manifestly unrelated to domestic political considerations.

Past actions could be viewed as creating a moral obligation only if they happened to support a course of action determined by other considerations. M. Garet, speaking in the name of the *Indépendants* on December 27, as the Assembly was being asked by the government to

undo its rejection of WEU three days earlier, said that the final decision should "depend on the answer to two questions": (1) If WEU were definitely rejected, would another negotiation with the allies be feasible? (2) Could a unilateral rearmament of Germany be avoided? "If your answer is yes, then it would become possible to reaffirm our hostile vote of the other night. But if your answer were to be no, . . . then the situation would be different. In that case nobody could doubt that your appeal, M. le Président du Conseil, to the 350 deputies who voted in your favor after London and before Paris should be heard. This conclusion could, to my mind, be avoided only if it were possible to maintain that the content of the Paris Agreements is such that the 350 deputies in question, or some among them, could pretend to have been freed from the obligations toward you which they had, at least implicitly, assumed" (pp. 6873-74). In other words, only in a situation that allows no alternative need one recall a moral obligation that reinforces the only possible course of action. Only if it were politically harmful to reject the Paris Agreements should one recall the earlier moral commitment not to reject them. Nobody protested against this view.

It is not surprising that, in such an atmosphere, the appeal to the 350 deputies who had voted for the London Agreements on October 12 was not a significant element in the parliamentary situation in December. It was mainly used by Mendès-France as an emergency device, and then not until the small hours of December 24, when the danger to WEU suddenly became visible. He said then: "If the government has remained faithful to the policy approved by 350 deputies on October 8, these deputies must in their turn remain faithful to the contract concluded between us" (p. 6840).

It seems clear at this point that the stress put on "contracts" between the government and the Assembly—which is particularly characteristic of Mendès-France, but is also generally important in French politics—is intended to combat (but may in fact tend to reinforce) the strong urge to be unfaithful to anything which is felt as an obligation.

#### LET GEORGE DO IT

WEU was rejected on December 24 by 280 votes against 259 (with 88 deputies choosing various forms of abstention) chiefly because, as late as a few hours before the vote, ratification seemed to most to be a foregone conclusion. Not since March 7, 1952, when Pinay became Premier partly because it was so widely believed that he would not, had a decision been brought about as a result of self-defeating predictions. The generally accepted hypothesis was that WEU would be ap-

proved. On the basis of this hypothesis, enough deputies voted against it so that the hypothesis was upset.

As early as December 20, at the very beginning of the debate on the Paris Agreements, M. Isorni (*Modéré*) spoke of "those who are convinced that the Agreements must be ratified" but "who count on the vote of a majority . . . which they refuse to join." He expressed the utopian wish that "everybody should vote as if his own vote were decisive" (p. 6652). Two days later, M. Le Bail (Socialist) made a reference to ". . . those deputies who calculate that there will be a sufficient number to vote . . . in favor of German rearmament, so that they need not themselves incur this disagreeable responsibility" (December 22, p. 6754). His statement was greeted with "applause on numerous benches of the Center, of the Right and of the Extreme Right" as well as with exclamations of "Very good!" on the part of MM. Billotte (*Modéré*) and Daniel Mayer (Socialist). Shortly afterwards, Paul Reynaud proceeded to illustrate Le Bail's point by justifying the impending abstention of a number of *ex-cédistes* among the *Modérés* in the following words: "Those who have brought France to the present impasse affirm that there is now no other solution than that proposed today. We answer them that, if this be so, our will to safeguard Western solidarity will prevent us from voting against the Agreements. And once they will have been adopted by the majority . . . (December 22, p. 6761).

After the vote of December 24, M. de Bénouville (*Républicain social*), one of the deputies whose change of position of December 30 made the final passage of WEU possible, admitted that he had abstained on December 24 in the belief that it would not matter: "Though I abstained last Friday in order to indicate my disagreement with the government . . . I cannot now overlook the fact that the very existence of the Atlantic alliance is at stake. In these circumstances . . . I cannot refuse the Atlantic alliance my vote" (December 29, p. 6880).

A certain attitude of Mendès-France himself helped the hypothesis to defeat itself. In his speech of the evening before the vote, he mentioned a then widely shared prediction: "If tomorrow, by misfortune, the Assembly were to divide itself into three roughly equal parts, and if thus its decision [in favor of WEU] were to come about only by virtue of a considerable number of abstentions . . . , then [here he added a very unusual challenge] it would almost be better for us to say no" (p. 6822). In a parliament in which the unceasing struggle for mere survival absorbs such a large part of each government's energy after its first weeks or months of grace, the fact that Mendès-France

insisted on the luxury of a large majority could only reinforce the belief that he himself—a parliamentary forecaster of some repute—was sure of ratification.

Just before the beginning of the WEU debate, the MRP had, despite its opposition to the government, abstained from the December 20 vote on Indochina; it had done so grudgingly only because it did not want to see Mendès-France overthrown in time to avoid the responsibility for the passage of the Paris Agreements which were soon to be debated. But, despite this MRP "sacrifice," Mendès-France won an impressive victory on the Indochina vote; to the surprise of most forecasters, it transpired that he did not even need the MRP vote in order to survive. This mishap determined many MRP members (who were in any case smarting under their reputation for parliamentary clumsiness) not to expose themselves again to such ridicule. Mendès-France's statement that he preferred the rejection of WEU to its ratification by a small vote reinforced this MRP determination. Mendès-France morally condemns abstention and says that he prefers a negative vote to it, they said. All right, we will give him our negative votes, all the more as he is surely asking for them because he is, rightly, certain that they will not impede ratification.

The intense aversion of many deputies to needless self-sacrifice, as well as a disinclination to go along with what they believed to be the attempt of other parties and factions to impose on them burdens which the latter should themselves carry, fostered adoption of the reassuring prediction of passage that allowed them to reduce their own inner conflict by enabling them to consider self-sacrifice unnecessary. Thus, anti-WEU Socialists counted on the determination of factions represented in the government (which they were not) to save it by securing ratification, and MRP deputies relied in their turn on the Socialists' voting discipline to ensure passage.